

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A smoke-permeable, moisture-resistant, tubular, biaxially oriented food casing, said casing comprising a mixture of at least one aliphatic (co-)polyamide and at least one water-soluble synthetic polymer,

wherein the water vapor transmission rate of the casing ranges from 40 to 200 g/m²·d, measured at 85 % relative humidity and 23 °C, and the resulting food casing is water resistant without crosslinking.

2. (Currently Amended) The food ~~ehasing~~ casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the aliphatic (co-)polyamide is poly(ϵ -caprolactam), poly(hexamethylene adipamide), a copolymer of ϵ -caprolactam and ω -laurolactam, nylon 6/66, a polyetheramide, polyesteramide, polyetheresteramide, or polyamidourethane.

3. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the content of the aliphatic (co-)polyamide is 50 to 94% by weight, based on the total weight of the mixture.

4. (Currently Amended) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the water-soluble, synthetic, organic polymer is (i) a partially or completely saponified poly(vinyl alcohol), (ii) a copolymer having vinyl alcohol units, (iii) a poly(alkylene glycol), (iv) a copolymer having alkylene glycol units, (v) a polyvinylpyrrolidone, (vi) a copolymer having vinylpyrrolidone units and units of at least one α,β -olefinically unsaturated monomer, (vii) a homopolymer or a copolymer having units of N-vinylalkylamides and/or (viii) a (co-)polymer ~~or polymer~~ having units of α,β -unsaturated carboxylic acids or α,β -unsaturated carboxamides.

5. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the content of the at least one synthetic, water-soluble polymer is 3 to 50% by weight, based on the total weight of the thermoplastic mixture.

6. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the mixture comprises at least one additive which influences the optics, haptics, the moisture storage capacity or the peeling behavior.

7. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 6, wherein the at least one additive is a polysaccharide, an inorganic filler or a color pigment.

8. (Currently Amended) The food casing as claimed in claim 7, wherein the additive is an inorganic filler consisting of quartz powder, titanium dioxide, calcium carbonate, talcum, mica or another aluminosilicate, glass staple fibers, other mineral fibers or microglass beads.

9. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 6, wherein the content of the at least one additive is 0 to 25% by weight, based on the total weight of the mixture.

10. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 7, wherein the additive is a polysaccharide selected from starch, cellulose, an exo-polysaccharide or a polysaccharide derivative.

11. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the mixture comprises a plasticizing aid selected from one or more of glycerol, mono- and diglycol, trimethylolpropane, a mono-, di- or triester of glycerol with carboxylic acids, formamide, acetamide, N,N-dimethylformamide or N,N-dimethylacetamide.

12. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said food casing is tubular and seamless.

13. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 12, wherein said food casing is bent into a ring shape.

14. (Withdrawn) A method for producing a food casing as claimed in claim 1, said method comprising

- (i) heat plasticizing a mixture which comprises at least one aliphatic (co-)polyamide and at least one water-soluble synthetic polymer,
- (ii) extruding the heat plasticized mixture through a ring die to form a primary tube,
- (iii) cooling the primary tube,
- (iv) heating the cooled tube to a temperature required for stretching and
- (v) biaxially stretching the heated tube to form the food casing.

15. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in claim 14, further comprising heat setting the casing after stretching.

16. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in claim 14, further comprising forming the tubular casing into a ring or spiral shape.

17. (Previously Presented) An artificial sausage casing comprising a food casing as claimed in claim 1.

18. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 3, wherein the content of the aliphatic (co-)polyamide is 55 to 90% by weight, based on the total weight of the mixture.

19. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 5, wherein the content of the at least one synthetic, water-soluble polymer is 10 to 40% by weight, based on the total weight of the thermoplastic mixture.

20. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 9, wherein the content of the at least one additive is 1 to 20% by weight, based on the total weight of the mixture.

21. (New) The food casing as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the water vapor transmission rate of the casing ranges from 72 to 200 g/m²·d.

22. (New) The food casing as claimed in Claim 1, said casing comprising a mixture of (i) thermoplastic consisting of one or more aliphatic (co-)polyamides and (ii) at least one water-soluble synthetic polymer.

23. (New) The food casing as claimed in Claim 21, wherein the water-soluble, synthetic, organic polymer is a mixture of partially or completely saponified poly(vinyl alcohol) and a poly(alkylene glycol) and said casing further exhibits an extraction loss ranging from 2.8 to 4.4 weight %, based on the weight decrease of said casing after storage for 1 hour in water at 80 °C and subsequent drying in vacuo.

24. (New) The food casing as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said casing is mono-layered.